

March 1, 2005
Milton, Florida

The Marine Advisory Committee met on the above date with the following members present: Chairman Ken Johnson, Vice-Chairman Pasco Gibson and members Robert Turpin, Dan Wakley, and Jeff Marker. Also present were the County Administrator (Hunter Walker), Marine Extension Agent (Christina Verlinde), and Public Works Director (Avis Whitfield). Chairman Johnson called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.

Gibson moved approval of the January 4, 2005 minutes; Marker seconded, and the vote carried unanimously (5-0).

Johnson introduced Jeff Marker as the District Five committee member. Marker said he is proud to be here and will do his best to serve the county.

Walker distributed a letter from the County Attorney concerning the Florida Sunshine Law (Attachment in file). He said this committee operates as an advisory board to the Board of County Commissioners; therefore it falls under the Florida Sunshine Law. Walker said the committee members can not discuss any business pertaining to the Marine Advisory Board outside of the meetings; however committee members can have discussions with county staff. Johnson said if a committee member has a personal interest in an action he should recuse from voting.

Boat Ramp – Post Hurricane Ivan Update, Public Works Director

Whitfield said the repairs at Woodlawn Beach pier are almost complete. He said the next project will be rebuilding the two piers at Oriole Beach ramp. He said these are the two busiest boat ramps in Santa Rosa County. He said Woodlawn Beach should be open by the end of the week, and Oriole Beach boat ramp will be closed while repairs are underway. He said the only county boat ramp that will officially be closed, after this week, will be the Oriole Beach ramp. Whitfield discussed other boat ramps in the county that are accessible by vehicle but have damage to the access roads.

Waterway Debris Update, Public Works Director

Whitfield said the debris removal contracts were awarded by the Board of County Commissioners. He said the county is in the process of getting those contracts signed and anticipate the work beginning very soon. Turpin asked the funding source. Whitfield said NRCS (Natural Resources Conservation Service) is funding 75%, and the county will fund the remaining 25%. He said the county anticipates going out for bid on three more property sites, and the property owners will be asked to fund the 25% match on the privately owned sites. Turpin asked if the county has had any communication with the NFWMD (Northwest Florida Water Management District) regarding whether the state waterways are going to be cleaned up. Whitfield said he has not had any communication with NFWMD. He said he heard water management is getting ready to go forward with a project to remove debris from State waters. Whitfield said he is unaware of the magnitude of the project.

Turpin asked if the county has a count on the number of derelict vessels. Whitfield said, with the sites the county will be cleaning up, he is only aware of one county project where two derelict vessels are in the canal. He said the county was told to contact Florida Game and Fish, and they will handle derelict vessels. Turpin said he spoke to the captain of the local Fish and Wildlife Division of Law Enforcement and was informed they are very close to having an inventory of sunken vessels. He said the owners of the vessels will be identified. Turpin said if removal of sunken vessels is left up to the county, the county can perhaps get some reimbursement from the vessel owners if the county chooses to do so. Whitfield said NRCS felt it best to stay away from sunken vessels with the NRCS funded projects. Turpin said Charlotte County has quite a few of sunken vessels, and they are using NRCS funding to remove the sunken vessels. Whitfield said Santa Rosa County specifications were not written to include sunken vessels.

Gibson said he spoke to the Coast Guard, and they have money budgeted for derelict vessels sunk in waterways. Turpin asked Gibson if he has a contact person. Gibson said to check with Pensacola Coast Guard.

Walker reviewed the NRCS funded projects. He said the bids so far have come up well under the \$4 million funding. Walker said the county will be looking for additional projects to complete. He said the funds are for debris removal only in inland waterways associated with drainage or erosion control.

Wakley said Commissioner Goodin requested the Marine Advisory Committee help the county locate debris that needs to be removed from waterways. He said he has a list of areas he is aware of where debris is not in the waterway itself but adjacent to the waterways in wetlands. Walker said the county does not have a lot of discretion with the \$4 million. He said there are massive amounts of debris in the wetlands, and he is not sure how this debris will be removed. Walker said the state is very restrictive with the wetlands. Whitfield said there are guidelines and limitations with the NRCS funds.

Wakley named several streams, small rivers, and canals in need of debris removal. Whitfield said a number of the canals mentioned by Wakley are included in the current county projects, and some of the areas named are waters of the state. There was discussion on several areas throughout the county that need to be cleaned up. Wakley asked if anyone has talked to Pace, Milton, and Gulf Breeze concerning their inland waterways. He said Goodin is particularly interested in the areas at Fairpoint, Deer Point, and towards the Three Mile Bridge. Whitfield said possibly the municipalities can contact Steve Duncan and become the applicant with NRCS for those types of projects. Wakley asked if the municipalities are aware of NRCS funding. Walker said he will contract Gulf Breeze and Milton. There was continued discussion on the tremendous amount of debris in Santa Rosa County and funding sources to help with the expense of removing it.

Artificial Reef Request for Proposals

Verlinde said the county is still working on the artificial reef application for 2005-2006. She said Turpin has offered some guidance with artificial reef structures. Verlinde said the application due date is March 18, 2005. Turpin distributed four reef designs (Attachment in File). He said all four designs have good stability and durability. Turpin said the disadvantage with these types of modules is the marine life tends to be homogeneous. Turpin described the advantages and disadvantages of the four designs. He said Escambia County will be using the fourth reef design. Turpin said if Escambia County and Santa Rosa County unify their projects, it will make both of the applications stronger.

Marker asked for an update on the 2004-2005 and 2005-2006 artificial reef grant projects. Walker discussed background information on the two grant cycles and the current phase of the two projects. Marker asked for an explanation of the two county effort. Turpin said the artificial reef permitted area is 120 square miles located in the Gulf of Mexico. He said the two county effort is coordinating Escambia County and Santa Rosa County working towards objectives that are mutually beneficial. Turpin said this effort is a win win situation. He said the applications will be separate with similar reef projects. Johnson said in

this instance, he is agreeable to the joint effort. Wakley said the county has received \$25,000.00 artificial reef grants for the past nine years. He said a decision needs to be made on the artificial reef design to be submitted with the 2005-2006 grant application.

Turpin said there will be separate applications, and the sites will be ¼ mile apart. He described the material used and the size of the reef design in detail. Turpin said his recommendation is a combination of the reef designs; one reef as shown in design one and one reef as shown in design four. He said the cost to deploy the two reef designs will be \$30,000.00. Wakley asked if the county can request \$30,000.00 on the grant application. Marker asked if funds can be requested to deploy four reefs instead of two. Turpin said the state has \$600,000.00 to use throughout all the coastal counties for construction and monitoring of the reefs. He discussed several funding options the county could use, and his planned artificial reef application for Escambia County.

Walker said historically Santa Rosa County has used the boating improvement funds for boat ramps, and Escambia County has put more resources in artificial reefs. Walker said the Board of County Commissioners will be guided by this committee's recommendation. Whitfield said the future boat ramp improvements are not significantly high dollar projects. He said road paving needs are the only high cost projects, and he felt the boating improvement funds can not be used for repaving projects.

Marker suggested requesting a \$40,000.00 grant and using \$20,000.00 of the boating improvement funds to deploy four artificial reefs. Gibson said he felt the boating improvement funds can be used to pave roads that are used exclusively for access to boat ramps. He said a lot is already planned off shore, and he felt the boating improvement funds should be used locally. Johnson asked the rate of road paving. Whitfield said if the road paving is done by the county, the material cost will be about \$100,000.00 per mile. He said there was a conversation with the FDOT (Florida Department of Transportation) concerning FDOT repaving the road to Archie Glover boat ramp if the county will allow the area to be used as a turn around area for trucks. Whitfield said there is also the possibility of the engineering firms bidding on the FDOT Interstate 10 Bridge project repaving the Archie Glover boat ramp road as a mitigation project.

Johnson said he felt the best use of the boating improvement funds at this time will be for artificial reefs.

Wakley moved approval of requesting \$30,000.00 and using the reef designs proposed by Turpin for the 2005-2006 Artificial Reef Grant application with Turpin working with county staff on the reef designs. Turpin seconded, and the vote carried unanimously (5-0).

Turpin said he was informed the state does not want the design of the 2004-2005 Artificial Reef construction project changed because it has already gone through the competitive process. Verlinde said the reef proposals for the 2004-2005 grant will be ready at the next meeting, and the completion date is June 30, 2005.

Other Business

Wakley said there has been discussion on a pump out station at Navarre Beach. He said he does not know where the funding will come from, but he requests county staff look into the possibility of establishing a pump out station at the Navarre Beach boat ramp. Johnson requested county staff investigate the feasibility of a pump out station and have the information as an agenda item at the next meeting.

Wakley said Goodin asked him to have staff look into the options of purchasing land at Oriole Beach, East River, and Holley #1 boat ramp areas. He said the Oriole Beach area currently has two lots for sale. Wakley said there are virtually no parking areas at these three boat ramps.

Turpin said there is a Senate Bill working its way through the Florida legislature regarding vessel registration fees. He said the State of Florida is almost in a crisis with regard to public access to the waterways. Turpin said the Florida Department of Environmental Protection will be looking at changing the unit slip fees. He said public marinas are being purchased for private use. Turpin said this is a growing problem in the state. He said all coastal communities need to look at protecting the public access where it exists and try to obtain as much public property on the waterways as possible. Turpin said there is a growing population and shrinking public access to waterways.

Johnson asked where the money will come from. Walker said there may be grant funds available. He said Florida Forever, Nature Conservancy, and other programs of this type have funds available to assist with land purchases. Walker said the only other funds are county funds, and it will need to be determined if this is the best use of county funds. Turpin discussed other available grants at the state and federal level.

Wakley asked if boating improvement funds can be combined with the Parks and Recreation's budget for a combined effort. Walker said the boat ramps are treated as part of the Parks and Recreation Department. He said everyone will need to be creative with funding options. Walker said county staff can do some basic feasibility research.

Turpin suggested this committee provide a strategic plan ten years into the future. He asked the committee members to consider strategic planning for discussion at a future meeting. Turpin said the real estate market moves at such a fast pace that the property will probably already be purchased by the time the Marine Advisory Committee has a meeting. He said a plan needs to be in place with the county allocating funds to purchase specific properties as they become available. Johnson said there is a set county procedure for land purchases. He said the committee's responsibility is to advise the Board of County Commissioners of the committee's recommendations.

Wakley moved approval of the Board of County Commissioners to have county staff gather information on purchasing land at Oriole Beach, Holley #1, and East River boat ramp areas; Turpin seconded, and the vote carried unanimous (5-0).

Turpin asked Walker what the land purchase process will be. Walker said he will take the recommendation to the Board of County Commissioners to approve preliminary work. Turpin asked Walker to let the committee know when this will go before the Board of County Commissioners. Marker suggested property around all of the boat ramps be identified. Walker said staff has made available to the committee, the locations where parking is critical. Marker said now may be the time to purchase properties near boat ramps on prescription roads, before the property values escalate. Walker said he will get staff to collect information on properties near boat ramps.

Marker moved approval of recommending county staff identify properties near boat ramps for possible future purchases; Turpin seconded, and the vote carried unanimously (5-0).

The next Marine Advisory Board meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, April 5, 2005 at 5:00 p.m.

There being no further business to come before the committee at this time, the meeting adjourned at 6:40 p.m.